

# RACING THIS WEEK

**O'REILLY FINISH:**  
Justin Allgaier takes the checkered flag to win Saturday's NFPA 250 at Martinsville.  
**J. Kupferman/Getty**



## O'REILLY RECAP

• **Saturday's** NFPA 250, Martinsville Speedway



**WINNER: JUSTIN ALLGAIER**

Justin Allgaier ended the day where he started — out front — but it was a dramatic and challenging route to the trophy hoist in Saturday's O'Reilly Auto Parts NFPA 250 at the historic half-mile Martinsville Speedway.

En route to his win, the 2024 series champion started from pole position and led the most laps (114 of 250). The driver of the No. 7 JR Motorsports Chevrolet claimed his second win in as many weeks — third of the season and 31st of his career.

Allgaier led the opening 65 laps of the race, won Stage 1, and then led the final 26 laps, bookending a typically thrilling edition of competition at the famed paperclip track.

"I keep saying it and I keep talking about how great this team is, but we have fired off 2026 better than I could have imagined," said Allgaier, whose win marks the JR Motorsports organization's fifth consecutive this season — one shy of the record set by Joe Gibbs Racing in 2008.

"It is pretty incredible, just the emotion," added the 39-year-old, who has increased his advantage atop the standings to 92 points over reigning series champion Richard Childress Racing's Jesse Love. "I said it last week, but you get later on in your career, and you never know if you'll win another one and this year has been pretty special."

The victory is hard-earned, considering the race was slowed 13 times because of incidents on the notorious, challenging short track.

Most impactful, a 19-car pileup on a late race restart brought out a 26-minute red flag, massively reducing the field of true contenders. Late model superstar Lee Pulliam, making his first-ever start in a NASCAR national series driving the No. 9 JR Motorsports Chevrolet, brought out the caution period after missing a shift on the restart from his front row starting position.

His team co-owner, Hall of Famer Dale Earnhardt Jr., reassured and encouraged Pulliam on the radio during the race stoppage, telling him "I know you didn't want that to happen, and you'll handle it like a pro, we all make mistakes." Adding post-race, "all in all, incredible to come in, run a race, lead laps and run the car up front and get a great result in a tough place, he survived. He's a helluva driver."

After the race, Pulliam, whose 40 laps led were second only to Allgaier, immediately addressed the late-race restart situation. "Just first off real quick, I'd like to apologize to everyone we tore up there. I just couldn't get going with the older tires and it was just a little bit of inexperience."

Corey Day's second-place finish in the Hendrick Motorsports No. 17 Chevrolet was a career-best and sixth consecutive top-10 finish. Sammy Smith finished third. Haas Factory Team's Sheldon Creed finished fourth in the No. 00 Chevrolet with Pulliam rounding out the top five.

Austin Hill was sixth, followed by Dean Thompson, Cup Series regular Ross Chastain, Ryan Sieg and Brent Crews rounding out the top 10.

## COOK OUT 400

Good pit strategy and a motivated team rallied Chase Elliott to victory Sunday at Martinsville; the sport's reigning Most Popular Driver delivering Chevrolet its first win of the season all to the delight of a huge enthusiastic crowd.



Chase Elliott, driver of the #9 UniFirst Chevrolet, takes the checkered flag to win the Cup Series Cook Out 400 at Martinsville Speedway on Sunday. (Jacob Kupferman/Getty)

# Chef Elliott clocks in with a savory Cook Out win

**M**ARTINSVILLE, Va. — Good pit strategy and a highly-motivated team rallied Hendrick Motorsports' Chase Elliott to the Cup Series victory Sunday in the Cook Out 400 at Martinsville Speedway; the sport's reigning Most Popular Driver delivering Chevrolet its first win of the season all to the delight of a huge enthusiastic crowd at the historic half-miler.

Elliott short-pitted on lap 261 to gain track position then moved his No. 9 Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet into the lead for good after a restart with 68 laps remaining — ultimately out-running the day's most dominant driver, Joe Gibbs Racing's Denny Hamlin to the checkered flag by .565-second to extend the Hendrick team's track record win total to 31 victories.

"It was definitely a team effort, how about that, that was awesome," said Elliott, the 2020 NASCAR Cup Series champion, who made his very first NASCAR Cup Series start at Martinsville exactly 11 years ago to the day.

"We've never had a win this early in the season. Just a really great team effort. So proud of [crew chief] Alan [Gustafson] the crew really did a great job. We took a gamble and were going to two-stop that last stage and honestly believe it was going to work out either way."

"Just so proud. Sure is a lot of fun when days like this work out."

Elliott, 30, of Dawsonville, Ga., said he had been confident in the car's speed all weekend and on Sunday, just needed that clutch pit call to get up front and seize the chance.

"This whole deal is really weird the way it works," said Elliott, who now has 22 career wins. "Fortunately got that lead on the last one [restart] and fell into a good pace. Just had enough."

"Probably needed a little bit to be just the absolute best out-right but we were really close and were able to manage and save enough to get through traffic at the end."

"But man, it's really cool when this stuff works out. To win these races is just so tough. Really grateful for the opportunity as always. I never take it for granted."

Hamlin's No. 11 JGR Toyota led a race-best 292 of the 400 laps and for much of the afternoon looked to absolutely run away

with his seventh grandfather clock trophy. But after Elliott got out front, Hamlin was playing catch-up and never really was able to get close enough to attempt a pass in the closing laps as the leaders navigated lapped traffic.

"He did a good job controlling the pace there," said Hamlin, who won both stages and was actually leading by three-seconds at the point Elliott made that all-important short pit stop to get up to the front.

"Just really came from that bad restart — just not much more that I could have done there. I felt like we gave it our all."

This year's Las Vegas winner, Hamlin said he was also concerned in the final laps that perhaps the car had a loose wheel on the final run, but said either way, "there are some races that get away from you in your career and this was certainly one of them."

Team Penske's Joey Logano rebounded from a rough 33rd-place outing last week at Darlington Raceway to finish third Sunday — equaling his best showing of the season in the No. 22 Ford.

"Weekends like last weekend you start to question everything, you have to right, as a competitor you have to do that, but nice to have a good rebound, solid car," the three-time series champion Logano said.

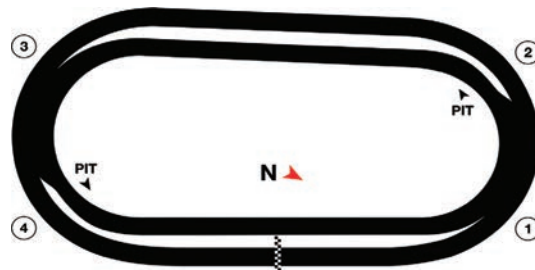
Fourth place finisher Ty Gibbs earned his fifth consecutive top-six of the season in the No. 54 JGR Toyota, and fourth top-five in the last five races. It marks his first top-10 at Martinsville.

Hendrick Motorsports William Byron — a three-time Martinsville winner — was fifth after leading six laps in the No. 24 Chevrolet. Penske's Ryan Blaney, JGR's Christopher Bell, Penske's Austin Cindric, Hendrick's Kyle Larson and Wood Brothers' Josh Berry rounded out the top-10.

The season's four-time race winner Tyler Reddick finished 15th but still holds a massive 82-point advantage over Blaney and is 94 points ahead of Hamlin atop the Cup Series standings. Reddick's 23XI Racing teammate Bubba Wallace, who finished 36th after triggering a 12-car accident on lap 325, dropped from third place to 11th in the standings.

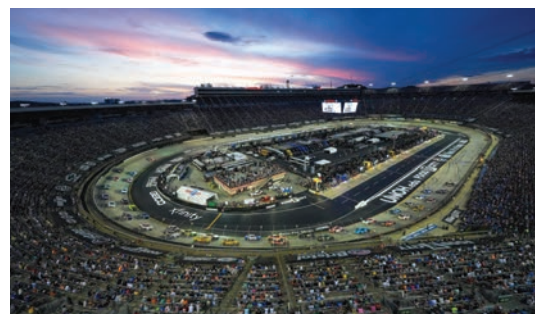
The Cup Series takes the first of the season's two off-weeks this weekend before resuming April 12 at Bristol. Larson is defending Bristol Spring race winner.

## NEXT: FOOD CITY 500



**Bristol Motor Speedway**  
3 p.m. ET Sunday, April 12, FS1

- **Location:** 151 Speedway Boulevard, Bristol, Tennessee
- **Capacity:** 146,000
- **Owner:** Speedway Motorsports (January 1996-present)
- **Opened:** July 23, 1961
- **Course:** Oval (1961-present)
- **Surface:** Concrete
- **Length:** 0.533 mi (0.858 km)
- **Turns:** 4
- **Banking:** Turns, 24–28°; Straights, 4–8°
- **Fastest Cup lap:** 0:14.945; Kyle Larson, Chevrolet SS, 2018
- **Nicknames:** World's Fastest Half-Mile, The Last Great Colosseum, Thunder Valley, Holy Grail of Short Tracks



Kyle Larson won last year's Food City 500 at Bristol. GETTY

## 2026 CUP SERIES STANDINGS

Top 30 as of March 29

Rank/Driver	Points	Rank/Driver	Points
1 Tyler Reddick 23XI	353	16 Daniel Suárez Spire	167
2 Ryan Blaney Penske	271	17 M. McDowell Spire	158
3 Denny Hamlin Gibbs	259	18 Austin Cindric Penske	149
4 Chase Elliott Hendrick	249	19 Ross Chastain Track	136
5 William Byron Hendrick	238	20 AJ Allmendinger Kaulig	134
6 Ty Gibbs Gibbs	222	21 Chase Briscoe Gibbs	131
7 Christopher Bell Gibbs	212	22 Zane Smith Front Row	126
8 Brad Keselowski RFK	206	23 Erik Jones LEGACY	119
9 Kyle Larson Hendrick	206	24 Kyle Busch Childress	119
10 Chris Buescher RFK	206	25 Josh Berry Wood Bros	112
11 Bubba Wallace 23XI	206	26 J. Nemeček LEGACY	109
12 Joey Logano Penske	185	27 Austin Dillon Childress	105
13 Ryan Preece RFK	180	28 Todd Gilliland Fr. Row	96
14 S. v Gisbergen Track	174	29 Noah Gragson Fr. Row	93
15 Carson Hocevar Spire	171	30 Riley Herbst 23XI	90

## 2026 O'REILLY AUTO PARTS STANDINGS

Top 20 as of March 28

Rank/Driver	Points	Rank/Driver	Points
1 Justin Allgaier #7	373	11 Sam Mayer #41	172
2 Jesse Love #2	281	12 Taylor Gray #54	164
3 Sheldon Creed #00	257	13 Anthony Alfredo #96	144
4 Austin Hill #21	251	14 William Sawalich #18	143
5 Carson Kvapil #1	234	15 Ryan Sieg #39	140
6 Sammy Smith #8	231	16 Brennan Poole #44	139
7 Corey Day #17	225	17 Jeb Burton #27	122
8 Brandon Jones #20	198	18 Patrick Staropoli #48	116
9 Parker Retzlaff #99	195	19 Blaine Perkins #31	108
10 Rajah Caruth #88	175	20 Dean Thompson #26	103

**NEXT RACE:** N.C. EDUCATION LOTTERY 250, Rockingham Speedway, 2:30 p.m. ET Saturday, CW

## 2026 CRAFTSMAN TRUCK STANDINGS

Top 20 as of March 20

Rank/Driver	Points	Rank/Driver	Points
1 Chandler Smith #38	172	11 Brenden Queen #12	83
2 Kaden Honeycutt #11	139	12 Tyler Ankrum #18	82
3 Layne Riggs #34	131	13 Stewart Friesen #52	82
4 Giovanni Ruggiero #17	127	14 Daniel Hemric #19	75
5 Ty Majeski #88	121	15 Jake Garcia #98	74
6 Christian Eckes #91	119	16 Tanner Gray #15	74
7 Ben Rhodes #99	119	17 Grant Enfinger #9	71
8 Corey Heim #5	114	18 Connor Mosack #7	65
9 A. Perez De Lara #44	90	19 Daniel Dye #10	64
10 Justin Haley #16	89	20 Cole Butcher #13	61

**NEXT RACE:** BLACK'S TIRE 200, Rockingham Speedway, 4:30 p.m. ET Friday, FS1

## COOK OUT WINNER QUOTE

"It was definitely a team effort, how about that, that was awesome. We've never had a win this early in the season. Just a really great team effort. So proud of [crew chief] Alan [Gustafson] the crew really did a great job. ... Just so proud. Sure is a lot of fun when days like this work out."

— Chase Elliott, who outran Denny Hamlin to take Sunday's Cook Out 400



Chase Elliott and crew celebrate in Victory Lane Sunday at Martinsville.

JACOB KUPFERMAN/GETTY

# SEAS THE DAY

Reel in your hunger with this fresh catch!  
Creamy tuna salad with chopped celery piled high on a fresh-baked roll.



TUNA SALAD sub

Country Fair